

EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION

Working with Media Spokespersons

When approached by media during the event, the primary role of the disaster mental is to refer the media to an appropriate spokesperson.

The media can be important allies in promoting disaster mental health services and events to the community in the days following the event. Acknowledging the media's role in providing and sharing information with the public, and working to keep a cooperative relationship with them, is important. This can be accomplished by referring the media to the appropriate spokespersons, and following journalistic guidelines, such as those discussed below, when providing information about disaster mental health services and events.

Do

- Refer them to your organization's spokesperson.
- Make yourself available to them if approved by your organization.
- Realize that they decide what goes in their broadcast or publication and what they tell their audience.
- Make suggestions for the most important points to cover in the story or suggestions for other people to interview.
- Make points clear, concise, and consistent.
- Acknowledge when you do not have enough information or are unclear about something.

Do not

- Ignore them.
- Give them any information without the approval of the appropriate communication officer.
- Spoon-feed them stories or headlines.
- Dictate what you think they should put in their broadcast or publication.
- Expect that what you think is news will always be considered news by the media.